

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
February 1, 2021

The members of the City Council of the City of Phenix City, Alabama met at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time for the regularly scheduled work session on Monday, February 1, 2021, by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing. Upon roll call, the following members were present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing: Councilmember Arthur L. Day, Jr., Councilmember Vickey Carter Johnson, Councilmember Steve Bailey, Councilmember R. Griff Gordy, and Mayor Eddie N. Lowe. Also present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing were City Manager Wallace Hunter, City Attorney Jimmy Graham, and City Clerk Melony Lee. Department Heads in attendance by Zoom Video Conferencing were: Building Official Gil Griffith, City Engineer Angel Moore, Economic Development Manager Shaun Culligan, Finance Director Labrita King Copeland, IT Manager Mike Bauer, Assistant Fire Chief Tommy Cox, Golf Manager Mike Barber, Library Director Michele Kilday, Municipal Court Clerk Ruby White, Parks & Recreation Director Todd Hughes, Director of Human Resources Stephanie Chastain, Chief of Police Ray Smith, and Graduate Engineer John Spraggins.

Upon a quorum being established, Mayor Lowe called the meeting to order.

Councilmember Gordy led the invocation.

Mayor Lowe called upon Dennis Beson and Melissa Gaunt to address council, as listed on the agenda. Mr. Beson was present by the way of Zoom Video Conferencing and came forward to address Council. Mr. Beson advised that Ms. Gaunt would not be present for the meeting. Mr. Beson thanked Mayor Lowe, City Manager Wallace Hunter and City Council for their continued support. Mr. Beson reviewed the activities and events of the East Alabama Chamber of Commerce for 2020. Mr. Beson stated that the Chamber of Commerce has Leadership and Education Programs for the Community's adults and youth. Mr. Beson also stated that in 2020 the program ended with twenty adult and thirteen youth graduates. Mr. Beson further stated that the Chamber of Commerce has a program called Young East Alabama Professionals for adults between the ages of twenty-one and forty encouraging leadership in the community. Mr. Beson further stated that the Chamber of Commerce has completed their Bench Project from Dillingham Street to 13th Street. Mr. Beson stated that one of the benches includes the Positively Phenix City logo on it. Mr. Beson also stated that the Chamber of Commerce has experienced changes due to the Covid-19 Pandemic with staff and membership. Mr. Beson further stated that staff has reduced by one and membership reduced by eighteen businesses. Mr. Beson stated that the businesses had to close because of the pandemic or could not afford any extracurricular events. Mr. Beson also stated that the Chamber of Commerce reached out to some of the larger businesses in the Community to help some of the smaller businesses during the pandemic and created the Small Business Relief Fund and over twenty thousand dollars was donated to support those businesses that were severely affected by the pandemic. Mr. Beson further stated that grant funds are still available. Mr. Beson stated that the Chamber of Commerce has a Target Advisory Group that includes Ft. Benning, Smiths Station and Phenix City to encourage open conversation in economic community development. Mr. Beson also stated that the Chamber of Commerce is looking forward to working with the City in 2021. Mayor Lowe stated that communication and open dialogue are the key to a great partnership. Mayor Lowe also stated that the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce should continue to work together to grow Phenix City. Councilmember Day inquired about the Bench Project. Councilmember Day asked what the locations of the benches were and how many are there. Mr. Beson stated that there were twelve benches throughout the River Walk. Mr. Beson also stated that all of the benches were dedicated to people or businesses. Councilmember Johnson congratulated Mr. Beson and

the Chamber of Commerce for 2020 accomplishments during the pandemic. Councilmember Johnson stated that it was good to hear about the Small Business Relief Fund grant program to help the small business that may have struggled during the pandemic. Mr. Beson stated that the grant was for Chamber members and non-Chamber members. Councilmember Day asked if the Chamber of Commerce collaborates with the Chamber of Commerce in Columbus, Georgia. Mr. Beson stated that he and Economic Development Manager, Shaun Culligan take part of the Columbus 2025 partnership for the surrounding community. Mr. Beson also stated that the Chamber of Commerce has a good relationship with Ft. Benning as well. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that it is very important to have a liaison with Ft. Benning that meets and greets new incoming soldiers. Mr. Hunter stated that the City had one in the past and thinks that it would be a great idea to have one now. Mr. Beson stated that he would look into the idea and maybe collaborate with the Columbus Chamber. Councilmember Bailey thanked Mr. Beson for working with the businesses in Phenix City during these difficult times. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that having a liaison between the City and Fort Benning to build and maintain a relationship is very important. Mr. Hunter also stated that over the years the process has become obsolete. Mr. Beson stated that he would look into it and possibly cofounding the program with Columbus, Georgia. Councilmember Bailey thanked Mr. Beson and the Chamber of Commerce for all that they have done for Phenix City. Mayor Lowe thanked Mr. Beson for coming to speak with Council.

Mayor Lowe called upon Angel Moore, City Engineer, to discuss the actions taken by the Planning Commission at their January 26, 2021 meeting.

Mayor Lowe called upon City Clerk Melony Lee who discussed the following with Mayor and Council:

1. Reminded Council of board interview over platform Zoom after today's Work Session.
2. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on February 2, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center.
3. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet February 9, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
4. Reminded Council that the Alabama league of Municipalities Advocacy Day will be held on February 9, 2021 in Montgomery, Alabama and Councilmember Day and Councilmember Johnson will be in attendance.
5. Advised Council that City offices will be closed on February 15, 2021 in observance of President's Day.
6. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held February 16, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. over the platform ZOOM. This meeting will be held on a Tuesday afternoon due to the President's Day Holiday.
7. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on February 17, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM. This meeting will be held on a Wednesday morning due to the President's Day Holiday.
8. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet February 23, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
9. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on March 1, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. over the platform ZOOM.
10. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held on March 2, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM.
11. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet March 9, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
12. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Work Session to be held on March 15, 2021 at 3:00 p.m. over the platform ZOOM.

13. Advised Council of a regular scheduled Council Meeting to be held in person on March 16, 2021 at Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Lee stated that if Council prefers, the meeting could be held at 9:00 a.m. over the platform ZOOM.
14. Advised Council that the Planning Commission will meet March 23, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.
15. Reviewed upcoming board appointments.

Mayor Lowe stated that he spoke with Mr. Steve Franklin who informed him that he was interested in purchasing the old brick elementary school building across from the Library on South Railroad Street. City Manager Wallace Hunter asked if Mr. Franklin was going to purchase the building with personal funds. Mr. Hunter stated that the property will not be purchased by the City. Mayor Lowe stated that Mr. Franklin understood that the City would not be a part of the purchasing of the building. City Attorney Jimmy Graham stated that he had spoken to Mr. Franklin as well and that Mr. Franklin was in search of private investors.

Councilmember Bailey stated that with COVID-19 numbers steadily increasing, it may be in the best interest of the Citizens and City Council to hold the March 16, 2021 meeting at 9:00 a.m. by platform ZOOM and not in person at the Martin Idle Hour Park Community Center at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Lowe stated that it may take a while for everyone's confidence level is up to be in public gatherings even after the Pandemic is over. All of Council agreed to hold off on District in person meetings for now until further notice.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about COVID-19 Vaccination sites. Councilmember Johnson asked if the information has been posted on the City's Website. Councilmember Johnson stated that she received a phone call from one of the citizens in her District asking where they could go to receive the vaccine. Mike Bauer, IT Manager, stated that a lot of the information has been posted on the Website. Fire Chief Kris Kennedy stated that the Russell County Health Department or Jack Hughston Memorial Hospital may have shots available for certain risk groups. Chief Kennedy stated that the State of Alabama Department of Health has released information concerning eligibility for vaccinations.

Councilmember Johnson inquired about reclaiming sidewalks going up from Broad Street to Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway. Angel Moore, City Engineer, stated that the sidewalk project is being completed section by section as laid out in the ADA transition plan. Ms. Moore stated that the sidewalk for this portion of the project will stop at the last house on Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway.

Councilmember Day inquired about the Village Crossing project. Angel Moore, City Engineer stated that the Contractors stated that the final plat must be approved in that area before the project can move forward.

Councilmember Day inquired about the replacing of bridge on Old Seale Road project. City Engineer Angel Moore stated that the project is still in the preliminary stages. Ms. Moore stated that the Engineering Department is working with ALDOT on the project. Ms. Moore also stated that no design work has been completed. City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that projects like bridge replacements take a lot of time. Mr. Hunter stated that the project may be completed in 2022.

Councilmember Day stated that he received a phone call concerning the condition of the flags located at the Community Cemetery on 4th Street South. Councilmember Day also stated that the caller mentioned the flags were faded and torn. Todd Hughes, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that new flags have been ordered and will be installed when they come in.

Mayor Lowe went over the agenda items.

City Attorney Jimmy Graham reviewed agenda claims with Council.

City Manager Wallace Hunter stated that people are having mixed feelings when it comes to taking the COVID-19 vaccination. Mr. Hunter also stated that people do not want to take the shot because of different reasons but mainly fear of the side effects. Mr. Hunter further stated the majority of the population would have to take the vaccine in order to reach herd immunity. Mr. Hunter stated the numbers in Russell County are continually increasing.

Mayor Lowe and Council interviewed candidates for the Zoning Adjustment and Appeals Board by platform ZOOM.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting adjourned until 3:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 16, 2021.